DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 040 826 RE 002 825

AUTHOR Edwards, John L.
TITLE Reading for Disadvantaged--Perspectives for Progress.
PUB DATE May 70
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the International Reading Association conference, Anaheim, California, May 6-9, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.85
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Differences, *Culturally Disadvantaged, *Curriculum Development, *Educational Disadvantagement, *Language Development, Language Programs, Reading Difficulty, *Reading Instruction

ABSTRACT

Some considerations for revising the curriculum to meet the educational needs of the disadvantaged are discussed. It is suggested that the lack of language development is basic to most reading problems at all school levels, particularly for the bilingual students. Therefore, a systematic and continuous language-development program from kindergarten through grade 12 is strongly urged. The importance of interverbal communication is stressed as a part of this program. Also discussed is the key role of the teacher in establishing a favorable learning climate, in motivating students, and in building positive self-concepts. Suggestions for the reading teacher outlining an approach to teach reading to disadvantaged students are made, and the role of administrative personnel in curriculum change is discussed. (CM)

ED040826

Dr. John L. Edwards, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Education
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

READING FOR DISADVANTAGED-PERSPECTIVES FOR PROGRESS

"The essence of the tragic, today is the spectacle of changeless mean and women and changeless teachers sitting serene in a troubled world, learning nothing themselves and teaching children their own ignorance. How long will American educators continue to perpetuate the downward mobility of the disadvantaged? How long will the disadvantaged wait? The answer to both questions is no longer. Since it is obvious that change is overdue for the sake of expediting and gearing the reading curriculum to the needs of the students, the myths about minorities, primarily Blacks, Mexicans, and Indiams must be buried in the bowel of

RE002 825

the traditional educational curriculum.

These students have been labeled as:

1. The culturally deprived
2. The economically disadvantaged
3. The culturally different
4. The Slow learner
5. The Retarded student
6. The Deviant Child
7. The Non-Lingual
8. Bilingual
9. Educationally Handicapped
10. Mono-Lingual
11. The un-motivated
12. Educationally disadvantaged

13. The culturally disadvantaged

14, Socially disadvantaged

15. Disadvantaged

16. Experienced Poor

17. Educationally underpriviledge

18. Disaffected

19. Chidlren Without

20. Children with limited background

Teachers, parents, adminiistrators have made harsh statements pertaining to these students,-"You just can't teach them", "All of them are just alike", "They don't seem to care", "They have no self respect and they don't respect others," "They are not responsible people", "Working with them is a waste of time","They don't want to learn", "They should go to their own schools", "I'm not going to lower my standards", "They need to pull themselves up", etc.

These myths indicate that these students are--slow, lazy, non-verbal, reluctant, cautious, stupid, not ready, and psychological misfits. There is no definitive proof substanted by empirical data to support any of these myths or labels.

Tomlinson said "We perceive things not as they are, but as we are." If there is any truth in this statement, American educators and laymen are just as disadvantaged as any one. If we think certain minorities are slow, stupid, and lazy, then they will be. In perspective, understanding and educating the disadvantaged is America's salvation. The disadvantaged learner will assist America to the fulfillment of its democratic ideals which, heretofore has not existed.

Most educators have yet to see a young child who does not want to go to school and learn. In fact the child wants to go before he is old enough. The child enters with a great amount of enthusiasm for learning. But, by the time the child is in the second grade and definitely

by the fourth, his attitudes about school and the learning process will have reached a low ebb. Attitudes of the student as well as the teacher form the demarcation line for the battle for the child's mind. Since teachers are the architects of man's mind, teachers had better build the self-concept right the first time, rather than raze the pychological structure, and start over again.

There is an exceptionally large percentage of our youngsters in the public schools today, in spite of the fact that our teachers are better prepared to teach reading and have more aids than ever before to do the job. On many occasions these students exhibit symptons, mannerisms, and behavior problems common to retarded children, yet their inability to read has nothing to do with their IQ. Often it is caused by a lack of language development due to a poor academic, economic and/or cultural environment. Educators can close the "language gap" by fostering language development.

Adequate language development on the elementary level should precede reading development in every single case. Inter-verbal communication should take place in every classroom everyday and on every level.

SECONDARY READING

Basic to most reading problems at the secondary level is a lack of language development of bilingual students. Since language is the basis for success and serves as the foundation forlearning and communication, schools should give language development top priority when considering curriculum change. There should be a systematic and continuous language development program from kindergarten through grade twelve. In this process, teachers should stage experiences that will elicit language, because verbal language depends on real or vicarious experience. Teachers can enhance this skill by providing class time for inter-verbal communication. Because disadvantaged students understand more language than they use, the teacher should bridge the "communication gap" by slowly building spans of meaningful sentences, since

disadvantaged pupils do not use words representative of the school culture and middle class. Many of these students are handicapped in language development because they do not perceive that objects have names and that the same object may have several names. Abstract words and concepts on the secondary level often leave the disadvantaged student bewildered. Pork barreling, log rolling , Iron curtain, gerry-mandering, pigeon holing, filibuster, often bring about faulty concepts for the disadvantaged. Teachers on this level must use as many concrete examples as possible to assist the disadvantaged reader and to provide an opportunity, when possible, for the student to apply the situation in everyday life.

If reading teachers believe in the ideals to which reading they are committed, they will re-evaluate the objectives and programs in terms of the basic needs of the American society and especially, the

reading needs of the disadvantaged minority.

The restructuring of the curriculum will become a dynamic reality when reading teachers, classroom teachers, and other educational specialist become recommitted, not only to the fulfillment of the ideals upon which this great nation was founded, but when teachers become more socially aware of our obligation as American citizens to work for the fulfillment of equality and freedom for all of our young people. This is our task as educators--and to this unfulfilled dream, educators must become courageously dedicated. Educators connot "play teacher" any longer because hypocracy will be unvielled.

In order for any reading program to be successful, the teachers must have a definite commitment to what they are doing and exercise patience while working with students. The warm, accepting and compassionate personality of the teacher is a characteristic that plays the key role in building confidence and a good self-attitude on the part

of the students. On the other hand, the schools should teach the three "r's" plus one--responsibility on the part of the student. Responsible students can be developed if, in the formative years, as well as later the teacher give reasonable assignments in small segments on a level the student can master because disadvantaged students need immediate gratification.

MOTIVATION

To motivate a disadvantaged student, it takes a person who really cares, someone with insatiable enthusiasm, someone who approaches the task of motivating others with concern to try something that will be effective, someone who is convinced his approach will work. There is no subsitute for the teachers' own enthusiasm as a motivational technique.

It is paramount to reach the student's inner self before he can be motivated. Teachers can often accomplish this by listening and conversing with the student. The disadvantaged has to know, without reservations,

that someone is sincerely interested in him as a person. Complete teacher acceptance of eachstudent is the most important step in motivating the disadvantaged. The deprived student is an expert at "tuning out" and "putting you on", unless the teacher is clever, creative, imaginative, resourceful, energetic, and patient, feedback and interverbal interaction will not be the outcome.

CURRICULUM

A PLACE TO START

Reading teachers should focus in on the reading interest of all students on every level as a starting place and saturate the students with materials to satisfy his desire.

An ideal approach may be to start with individual interest of students by a questionnaire or by individual conferences. Often these students indicate lettle or no interest in any area. It may take several attempts to make a breakthrough but you must gain the students confidence. Secondly, the teacher must acquire a wide variety of materials in the

students' area of interest. These reading materials should not be forced on a student. Thirdly, the teacher must make sure thematerials can be read by the student by assessing readability levels of the materials and the teacher must be cognizant. Fourthly, the student should be given time to discuss the material with the teacher and with other students who have similar interest. Fifth, the student should write a short sentence or paragraph about the pages he read in lieu of a book report or oral report. These assignments should be short and clear directions should be given. Sixth, Vocabulary development should be aphrase of this type of reporting. The vocabulary should not be a preceived list dictated by the teacher, but should originate from the student based on the interest area and the level of the material read. The teacher should encourage the development of all four vaocabularies- listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Seventh, concept formation should come about during the brief comferences with the teacher and with

other students. FOJIV

This approach is not the final answer, but it is a place to start and hopefully a interest in reading will develop on a wider base.

For the content area teachers on the secondary level, the teacher should start with the "now" and reverse the chronological order where applicable. For instance, many students study American history and only a fortunate few ever arrive to point inthe text and discussion of the events of the day. Students are more knowledgeable about events of the day than those of decades ago. Parallels can be shown between national and international conflict, riots, transportation, depressions, recessions, fashions, and politics. The "now" rather than the "past" often creates positive results.

ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL

In our controversial society today, considerable confusion exist concerning what needs to be changed-the schools or the students. Since

people are affected by schools, the schools should change. Teachers and administrators are in a state of dilemma to the extent that they won't abandon programs and other facets of curricula that are not producing able readers.

Administrative personnel need to concern themselves with curriculum matters as well as fiscal matters and policy. Money seems to determine the curriculum rather than the reading needs of the students. All other areas of study may result in complete or partial failure due to the reading deficiencies of the disadvantaged students. These curriculum changes should not involve "paper power", but should consider "student Potential".

School administrators will have to adopt new roles to be effective in educating the disadvantaged. The administratiors will have to provide a new leadership and create an academic partnership with parents and the entire business complex to resolve our many problems. Via this

process, teachers can develop sensitiveness and become "people oriented" and experiment more from the human aspect point of view within the framework of the human laboratory. The responsible persons must consider that when you are teaching the disadvantaged, you must work with the entire family in Family Seminars, employing the interdisciplinary approach to obtain maximum success. Business and industry must become active partners and provide job opportunities for youngsters and heads of households as both struggle through the academic process to acquire upward mobility. The schools should and must become the catalyst for shaping the lives of the disadvantaged and the teachers the architects of man's mind. The schools, as an institution, can change the direction of the disadvantaged away from failure toward potential effective citizens.

Some people say that this nation owes a debt wtih interest accum-

ulated over many decades to the plight of the disadvantaged. Disadvantaged students are demanding a payment in full for the past with interest. They don't want deferred interest nor a promisiary note. They want a cashiers check endoresed by teachers and stamped paid in full by school authorities.

This delemma needs perspective-the disadvantaged is America's salvation. Their need and desires must be granted via the educational institutions. Fullfillment of this need will swing the pendulum of time to the rhythm heartbeat of America's own soul-the democratic process. No longer can America pass from generation to generation on educational mortgage to unborn. A mortgage whose interest rate is spiraling via attitudes, campus unrest, unemployment, crime and a defeated self-concept. Educators must buy preferred stock with cumulated benefits for the disadvantaged. The investment that is required is concern commitment, and creativity.